

Augustine's compatibilism

KATHERIN A. ROGERS

Department of Philosophy, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19716

Abstract: In analysing Augustine's views on freedom it is standard to draw two distinctions; one between an earlier emphasis on human freedom and a later insistence that God alone governs human destiny, and another between pre-lapsarian and post-lapsarian freedom. These distinctions are real and important, but underlying them is a more fundamental consistency. Augustine is a compatibilist from his earliest work on freedom through his final anti-Pelagian writings, and the freedom possessed by the un-fallen and the fallen will is a compatibilist freedom. This leaves Augustine open to the charge that he makes God the ultimate cause of sin.

In analysing Augustine's views on freedom it is standard to draw two distinctions. One notes the historical development of his thought over time, from an earlier emphasis on human freedom, to a later insistence that it is God's will alone that governs human destiny. The other distinguishes between Augustine's view of pre-lapsarian freedom, in which the human being could choose rightly or wrongly, and post-lapsarian 'freedom', in which fallen man can choose only wrongly, unless turned towards the good by God's grace. These distinctions are real and important, but I will argue that underlying them is a more fundamental consistency. On the basic question of the way the free will *works*, Augustine, though he does not use the term which is of recent coinage, is what we today would call a 'compatibilist'. He holds that although the causes of human choices are ultimately traceable to factors outside of the agent, this is compatible with the agents being fully morally responsible for their choices. He expresses this position very clearly in the later, anti-Pelagian writings, but there is every reason to believe that he held it even in his earliest work on freedom. And though Augustine, early and late, holds that the options open to the free will before and after the Fall are different, an examination of the causes of the first sins shows that the basic nature of the will in terms of motivation and choice does not change.

This is of more than historical interest. From his day to ours, philosophers and theologians have been troubled by the later Augustine's rejection of any genuine causal role for human choice in the salvation of fallen man. For example, the second Council of Orange in 529 CE raised, against the later Augustine's position,

the same problem that faces compatibilists today. If the choices of rational agents are ultimately the product of causal factors outside the agent, in this case the issue being the Augustinian claim that God's grace irresistibly causes the elect to will rightly, how can the agent really be merit-worthy and responsible? The Council set the tone for the later development of Catholic thinking on this issue. While it upheld the necessity and gratuity of divine grace, it nonetheless backed away from the late Augustine and insisted that, having received grace, it is up to the human agent to persevere, and be rewarded with salvation.¹ But if the fundamental analysis of freedom is the same for the early Augustine as for the late, and if the mechanics of un-fallen willing are essentially the same as after the Fall, then the difficulties with Augustine's views on freedom do not stem from a late, over-zealous anti-Pelagianism. They are endemic to his basic philosophy of freedom and pose a problem for those sharing that philosophy.

First, some definitions and introductory remarks are in order. By 'determinism' I shall mean the view that a given choice, made by a rational agent, is the inevitable product of causes that do not originate from the conscious agent himself. 'Inevitable' here means that, *ceteris paribus*, the cause necessitates the effect. The '*ceteris paribus*' is needed since it might be the case that the cause occur, but some other cause intervene such that the effect not take place. For instance the agent on the brink of causally necessitated choice might be crushed by a boulder the instant before the effect, the choice, can occur.

Causal necessitation in this context could take many forms. So, for example, if the mad neurosurgeon who haunts the pages of contemporary free-will literature should implant a chip in an agent's brain that produces a brain event that makes the agent choose A over B, the choice for A is determined according to my definition; its cause is something which cannot be identified with the agent, since it is the chip and ultimately the mad neurosurgeon, and if the cause is operant the agent cannot fail to choose A. Or if the neurosurgeon engineers the implanting of a desire in the agent, such that in situation X, the desire leads to the agent inevitably choosing A over B, then in X, the choice for A is determined.

This second example might be thought to be less obviously an instance of determination than the first. Certainly it is different. The chain of causes is longer, but that, in itself, does not undermine causal determinism. It might be argued that the important difference is that one of the causes, the desire, is somehow less necessitating since it might be analysed more as *drawing* the agent towards the choice, rather than impelling him. I do not see that this distinction undermines the causally determined nature of the event, so long as the drawing leads to choosing as inevitably as impelling would. To appeal to an analogy which is distant, but perhaps still helpful, take a toy in which you have inserted a chunk of iron. It is one thing to push the toy off the edge of a table, and another to pull it over the edge using a magnet. In the second instance you might try to deny responsibility for the toy's falling by claiming that it moved on its own. And in a

sense it did. But you put the iron in and you held up the magnet and you didn't hold the toy so that it wouldn't follow its attraction to the magnet. The toy's falling is causally necessitated by factors outside itself, and that it was pulled rather than pushed does not seem to make a difference to that claim.

Take one last case: the neurosurgeon implants a cognitive faculty which reasons, and a desire, such that, in situation Y, the operation of the rational faculty and the desire lead inevitably to the agent choosing A over B. Though the causal processes which lead to the choice for A might now involve complex judgements, the addition of the cognitive faculty to the chain of causes does not mitigate the determinacy of the choice for A in Y. In each of these cases the choice for A is inevitable, and the causal chain which explains the choice for A can be traced back to a cause outside of the choosing agent, to the neurosurgeon. In each of these cases if, instead of the mad neurosurgeon, the originating cause outside of the choosing agent had been the processes of a blind nature, or the activity of God, the choice is no less determined.²

This is a somewhat narrow definition of 'determinism', focusing only on a choice and its causes, rather than on universal determinism. On this definition it is possible that a determined choice might have an indeterminate event in its causal history. For example, if the mad neurosurgeon makes a non-determined choice to implant the chip which causes the choice in the agent, the choice is still determined, although it has indeterminacy in its causal history. Or take a choice of which the sole, originating cause is the indeterminate motion of particles in the agent's brain and assume that the conscious agent is not the source of nor identifiable with the moving particles. This is, by my definition, a determined choice. Or suppose God's freedom is of the radical, voluntarist sort. Should God indeterminately will and cause the created agent to make a given choice, or produce in the agent faculties and desires that combined lead inevitably to a certain choice, that choice is determined by God, although it is ultimately the result of indeterminacy.

'Compatibilism' holds that it is consistent to believe that a given choice is determined and that the agent is nonetheless morally responsible for that choice. (The freedom that Augustine, and most of us, are interested in is not the freedom to choose between indiscernibles, but morally significant freedom, or, in Augustine's terms, the freedom to turn to God or to sin. That will be our topic.) Compatibilists typically grant that morally responsible choices must be made freely, and then analyse 'freedom' or 'free will' as compatible with determinism. Compatibilism is very popular today, and countless variations on the theme are advanced in the contemporary literature. Here it will suffice to sketch the outlines of a standard brand of compatibilism which, I will argue, is essentially Augustine's position.

Choice is caused by desire. The rational agent deliberates between options and comes to a conclusion about what it most desires and inevitably chooses that.

The agent is not the author of his reason or his desires. Perhaps his desires are shaped by his character, which may in turn be shaped by past choices. Still, there is a beginning to the process which must lie in the will's being inevitably drawn to choose what the agent pre-volitionally judges most desirable, because that is how motivation works. This is determinism since, under the circumstances, the choice is inevitable and the causes which lead to it are the product of factors outside of the agent. In a non-theist, naturalist universe the reasoning and desires which determine the choice are the product of the processes of blind nature. In a classical theist universe such as Augustine's, where all that has real ontological status is sustained in being from moment to moment by the divine will, they are given by God.³

Since the choice is the inevitable product of causes which do not originate from the agent, it is determined. Nonetheless, it is free because what 'freedom' *means* is the ability to follow one's rationally considered desires. Natural necessity, i.e. caused, non-deliberative behaviour, like the falling of a rock, is unfree. And compulsion, i.e. an agent's being forced to act against his will, is unfree. But choosing on the basis of one's considered desires, argues this standard version of compatibilism, is the essence of voluntary action. The agent can be held to be at least the proximate originator of his own choices in that they arise from factors within him; his own desires and judgements. And he has open options in that he can choose whatever attracts him most. Even after he has made his choice it is correct to say that, 'he could have chosen otherwise', because he could have if his desires and judgement had been different. And thus, the compatibilist concludes, the agent can be genuinely morally responsible. It is not just that rewarding and punishing him may have a salutary effect on him and on society as a whole. Though the agent's choices are determined, there is a sense in which they originate with him, and because he could have chosen otherwise, he genuinely *deserves* the praise and blame for his morally significant choices.

This is, of course, a problematic position. For the classical theist it entails that the free choice of the agent is caused by the reason and desires that God has given him, and which God sustains in him from moment to moment. Thus, God is the originating cause of the series of events that inevitably produce the choice. The created agent has only a kind of 'secondary' agency, on the analogy of secondary causality in general. Secondary causality is the sort of causal power created causes possess, in total dependence upon the primary causal power of God. It is correct to say that the fire burned the cotton, but the fire, the cotton, and all their properties and actions exist right now as the immediate effect of the active will of God. So it is equally, or perhaps more fundamentally, correct to say that God causes the cotton to burn.⁴

Augustine does not use the term 'secondary causality' but, as we will see below, he expresses the concept in precisely the context of explaining how a choice which is caused by God can still, in a sense, be caused by the agent. But if God is

the primary cause of the choices which we make as merely secondary agents, it is difficult to see how He can justly hold us responsible and escape the charge of being, Himself, the author of sin. Augustine, I will argue, leaves himself open to this problem.

One who holds created agents to be morally responsible, and who judges moral responsibility to be incompatible with determinism, may opt for 'libertarianism'. If (contrary to what I will argue) Augustine's position on the basic workings of free will changed radically over the course of his career, presumably the early Augustine was a libertarian. And if Augustine sees a radical difference between the nature of the will before and after the Fall, then presumably he believes that pre-lapsarian freedom was libertarian. I will take 'libertarianism' to mean the view that morally significant choice originates solely in the conscious agent. While all the aspects of the situation in which the agent faces the choice, including his desires and motivations, may be traced back to things or events which exist independently of the agent and his choosing, the same is not true of the actual choice. I do not take open options to be essential to libertarian freedom. An agent which existed absolutely from itself, like God, might recognize only one option (the 'best of all possible worlds' perhaps) and yet choose with libertarian freedom since its choice is generated entirely from itself.

For created agents in a theist universe, though, if we are to choose 'from ourselves', alternative possibilities may be necessary to enable libertarian freedom. If all that has genuine ontological status comes from God, then our reason and our desires are from Him. But if we are subject to conflicting desires, perhaps God can endow us with sufficient 'primary' agency that it is up to us in some absolute way which desire will 'win out' and constitute our choice.⁵ So libertarian freedom, for a creature, entails not only that the agent be the ultimate cause of the choice, but that there are alternative possibilities. It is important to note that emphasizing the 'aseity' ('from oneself-ness') of choice, allows one to hold that any given free choice may not, at the time it is made, entail genuine alternatives, so long as there were such alternatives somewhere in the history of the choice. Suppose, for example, that you briefly consider immorally lying, but quickly decide against it out of a long-established commitment to truth-telling. Maybe, given who you are now, you really could not have lied. But if your present truthful character is the result of past choices which were absolutely up to you, in that God caused conflicting desires in you such that the initial choices which cemented your propensity for truth-telling were entirely up to you, then although the present choice grows out of your character, it is made with libertarian freedom.

On this analysis, you do not *now* have to have open options to choose with libertarian freedom. And certainly you do not have to be able to choose just anything. The libertarian can hold that every choice you make may be motivated by desires and, to some extent, explicable through reasons. Nonetheless, there is a serious and standardly recognized 'intelligibility' problem with libertarianism,

which predates Augustine and is mentioned by him.⁶ If it is true that at some key choices in your moral career you faced literally open options, then there is no answer to the question, ‘But why did you opt for this over that?’. That is, you can explain the motivation for each choice, and so in a sense you can connect each choice with your character and interests. Nonetheless, when it comes to the actual choosing of one *over the other*, the libertarian holds that there is absolutely nothing except that you choose it which *makes* one option win out. Were we to rewind the tape of life to back before you made one choice, everything would be exactly the same as before, but this time you might make the other choice. But then, as the Stoics argued, ‘if events are not necessitated, they must be uncaused, inexplicable and hence mysterious’. And as such, the agent cannot really be held morally responsible.⁷ A defence of libertarianism lies outside the scope of the present paper.⁸ Here I will argue that Augustine was always a compatibilist, never a libertarian, and that his compatibilism is problematic.

Throughout his career Augustine consistently speaks of the soul being drawn by love. ‘My love is my weight; by it I am borne wherever I am borne.’⁹ ‘A material body is borne along in a particular direction by its weight, just as a soul is by its love.’¹⁰ ‘It is necessary that we do whatever attracts us more.’¹¹ James Wetzel writes that:

... one of the most important principles of Augustine’s philosophy of mind [is that] we always act in response to what attracts us (even if we should have to act in response to what repels us least). One tempting understanding of free will, that we are self-movers, is consequently ruled out of court. We have no motives for acting independently of what we perceive to be the good in acting.¹²

This certainly suggests compatibilism as I have defined it, and the later anti-Pelagian works very clearly express a compatibilist doctrine of freedom.

Grace and Free Choice, written in 426 CE, provides an excellent proof text.¹³ The work begins (2.2) by proving from Scripture that human beings do indeed have free choice and so we deserve praise for our good behaviour (‘good merits’) and blame for our wickedness. But it is the presence or absence of grace, which produces in us the praiseworthy or blameworthy choices,

But clearly, once grace has been given, our good merits also begin to exist, but through that grace. For, if grace is withdrawn, a human being falls, no longer standing upright, but cast headlong by free choice. Hence, even when a human being begins to have good merits, he ought not to attribute them to himself, but to God. (6.13)¹⁴

We merit heaven by living a good life, but the good life is itself a gift of grace. Therefore, ‘eternal life ... is grace in return for grace’ (9.20). And yet it is by our own wills that we choose. ‘It is certain that we will when we will, but [God] causes us to will what is good’ (16.32). ‘I think that I have argued enough against those who violently attack the grace of God which does not destroy the human will, but changes it from an evil will to a good will, and, once it is good, helps it’ (20.41).

Our wills are determined by God's grace to love and choose the good, and yet they are genuinely free, and the created agent who chooses well is justly praised and rewarded. In *Grace and Free Choice*, Augustine even suggests that the divine will is in control of the wills of those who do evil. He provides a list of scriptural instances in which God has caused evil wills and consequent deeds in order to achieve His good purposes; hardening Pharaoh's heart, causing the evil son of Gera to curse David, causing Judas to betray Christ (20.41).

Who would not tremble before these judgments of God by which God does what he wills even in the hearts of evil persons, repaying them, nonetheless, according to their merits? ... For the almighty produces in the hearts of human beings even the movement of their will in order to do through them what he himself wills to do through them, he who absolutely cannot will anything unjust. (21.42)

In the example about the son of Gera, God 'tells' him to curse David. Augustine says that this telling could not have been in the form of a commandment, else the cursing would have been obedient and praiseworthy. Rather, 'by his just and hidden judgement God inclined toward this sin that man's will which was evil because of its own sinfulness'. This seems to suggest the Calvinist doctrine of an explicit will of God in His commandments, and a hidden will by which God actually produces all events including sinful choices.¹⁵

In the book he was writing at his death, *Unfinished Work against Julian*, Augustine clearly expresses the interaction of divine will and human agency (at least *good* human agency) through an analogy with primary and secondary causality, implying that created free willing is what I have called 'secondary' agency.

And if God produces a good will in a human being, He does it so that the good will comes from the one whose will it is, just as He works so that a human being comes to be through another human being. Just because it is God who creates a human being that does not mean that the human being is not born from another human being. (5.42)

Not only does Augustine clearly express a compatibilist doctrine of will in these later works, but he considers libertarianism, and raises against it the standard 'intelligibility' problem. In his *Unfinished Work Against Julian*, he and his interlocutor, the Pelagian, Julian of Eclanum, agree that willing is the 'movement of the soul, with no compulsion' (5.41). But Julian goes on to hold that freedom, even as it exists in man after the Fall, is the ability to choose well or badly, with no pre-existent causal factors determining the choice. If the movement of soul arises from some preceding source it ceases to be free. Augustine has theological reasons to reject this view. As it stands, it seems to imply that we can merit salvation on our own, and if that is the case then Christ's sacrifice is unnecessary. But he also makes the philosophical case, often repeated by present-day critics of libertarianism, that Julian's position entails that a choice is a sort of random accident that happens to the agent. He writes, 'you say, certainly it begins to be, but it does

not have any source. Or, what is even crazier, it was not, it is, and nevertheless it never began'. Moreover, if the choice to sin is uncaused it seems as if sin is something that just happens to the agent without him genuinely *willing* it. But then how can the evil be connected to the agent such that the agent is really to blame (5.56)?

These later works certainly express a compatibilist doctrine of free will. Does this constitute a radically different position from that held by the early Augustine? Augustine himself, in his *Retractions* (426/427 CE), points to a change in his views on free will. He discusses how in *On Diverse Questions to Simplician*, written in the mid-390s, he had tried to solve the question of the pre-natal election of Jacob over Esau,

... in favour of the free choice of the human will, but God's grace triumphed. And it was only by reaching this point, that I could understand that the apostle had spoken with the clearest truth: What sets you apart? What do you have that you have not received? And if you received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? (2.1)

Some scholars argue that this work from the 390s signals a change in Augustine's philosophical analysis of the way the will works. James Wetzel writes, 'Augustine abandons this fiction [of libertarian free choice] when he comes to the conclusion, early in his long career as a theologian, that God can call sinners irresistibly to a new way of life.'¹⁶

Certainly, *To Simplician* represents a significant change in how Augustine assesses the responsibility of the human will in relation to God's saving action. It is here that he comes to believe that election is unconditional, not based on any humanly initiated petition for divine aid, and that the call to election is always effectual.¹⁷ But different as this may be from the views he expressed in his earlier work, the change does not necessarily signal a move from a libertarian to a compatibilist metaphysics of free will. Unless a libertarian position is expressed in the earlier writings, the change in Augustine's views need not reach down to the fundamental level of the basic workings of the will. The argument in *To Simplician* certainly constitutes an important realigning in Augustine's thought of the respective roles of divine and human willing, but on my interpretation, it is one made possible by the underlying compatibilist metaphysics of freedom Augustine had always assumed: we are drawn to choose what we judge most desirable. *To Simplician* would then mark the point at which Augustine realized that his doctrine of the will allowed him to insist upon the unqualified primacy of divine sovereignty without simply denying human freedom and responsibility.

Augustine's own analysis of his development on the question of free will supports this reading. In the *Retractions* he insists that the Pelagians misread his early work *On Free Will* (387/388–395 CE; books 2 and 3 were finished between 391–395) when they cited it in support of their own emphasis on human freedom. *On Free Will* was written against the Manicheans, who proposed two separate

wills in the human agent, such that one does evil by a will which is somehow not really one's own. In response, Augustine had emphasized that the human agent chooses good or bad through his own individual and single will, and so is morally responsible. But in looking back from his later perspective, Augustine insists that the earlier work does not advance a view of the relationship of the divine to the created will which is fundamentally different from the one he later enunciated against the Pelagians. Even in *On Free Will* he had maintained the position that all goods, including good choices, come from God. 'Since all goods, as we said, whether great or moderate or small, are from God, it follows that the good use of free will, which is virtue, is also from God, and is numbered among the great goods' (*Retractions*, 9.6).

This interpretation would have to be seen as Augustine misrepresenting his early work were there clear evidence of libertarianism in *On Free Will*. Certainly in that dialogue Augustine insists that our choices must be voluntary, for otherwise we could not be praised or blamed. And the voluntary movement of the will is clearly distinguished from motion which occurs by natural necessity like the falling of a stone (3.1.2). The will is likened to a hinge, in that it can turn towards the good or towards the bad (3.1.3). Nothing is so much in our own possession as our wills, and we have only to will the good will in order to possess it (1.12.26). But there is nothing here inconsistent with compatibilism, and so no evidence of libertarianism. On the contrary, the assumption seems to be that we choose what we are drawn to choose by our desires. In book 1 Augustine argues that *libido* is the driving factor in all wrongdoing (1.3.21). (There will be a great deal more to say about the cause of evil below in the discussion of the first sins.) And that the good man is defined by his love of what is eternal and immutable (1.15.31).¹⁸

In book 3 Augustine offers a list of types of 'choice' which are unfree and hence not really voluntary and open to praise or blame. They include choices made through, 'some violence which compels against one's will', 'some irresistible cause', or 'some deception' (3.18.51). These are exactly the sorts of examples compatibilists always give of what is *not* free choice, when they are explaining how being able to follow what you judge most desirable is enough freedom to ground moral responsibility. Augustine's list of unfree 'choice' does not include being inevitably drawn to choose the one option you find most desirable.¹⁹

Perhaps the most telling evidence against the libertarian interpretation of *On Free Will* is the absence, in that work, of what is today called the 'free-will defence'.²⁰ Augustine's dialogue is in part a theodicy. It asks: how is it that a perfectly good and omnipotent God permits evil? If Augustine had been a libertarian at the time he wrote the work, one would expect that he would avail himself of the free-will defence, since it is a standard libertarian answer to the theist problem of moral evil.²¹ The original premises of the free-will defence are these: God has made creatures with free will, and free will is a very good thing because without it the creature could not choose rightly and be virtuous. In *On Free Will*

Augustine wholeheartedly defends both of these claims. But the free-will defence goes on to argue the libertarian point that a genuine ability to *choose* the good in the way required for created aseity and morally significant freedom, necessarily entails the genuine, alternative possibility of *not* choosing the good, but instead choosing evil. Thus it is not possible for God to leave us free and yet prevent us from choosing evil. Some scholars have attributed this position to Augustine. Gilson, for example, in discussing *On Free Will* writes that for Augustine, ‘the possibility of the evil use of free will was the necessary condition for the goodness and happiness brought about by its good use’.²² But the text which he cites (2.19.52–53) does not say exactly this. It says that the will is an intermediate good which can turn towards good or evil, and that we must have a will if we are to love truth and wisdom and achieve happiness. But this does not entail that free choice must include aseity and open options, such that God could not bring about our always choosing good without impairing our free will.

In *On Free Will* Augustine does indeed ask why God did not make His rational creatures so that they would always choose the good, but he never suggests anything like the free-will defence in response. Rather, he says that God has made one class of such creatures, the good angels. God has also made creatures who would sin and be redeemed, and creatures who would remain in sin. But even the last category of creature is a good sort of thing, and it is better that it should exist, even in unhappiness, than that it should not exist at all. And all of these strata of created agents serve the order and beauty of the whole creation (3.5.14). Augustine here does not say that God simply *causes* the good angels to remain good. And he is careful to say that God does not somehow *need* sin in order to round out the universe (3.9.24). Nonetheless, his answer does not suggest the free-will defence or indeed any libertarian assumptions.

This sketchy response in *On Free Will* to the question of why God did not bring it about that rational creatures would always choose the good seems to be an early version of a more developed answer Augustine gives to the same question in *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, a work he wrote after *To Simplician* over a long period between 401 and 415. Here he writes, ‘They say that God should have made men so that they would have absolutely no wish to sin. Now, we concede that a nature is better which takes absolutely no delight in forbidden things’ (11.7.9). This seems to expressly deny the libertarian claim that it was best that God make men with the sort of morally significant freedom that entails genuinely open options. He goes on to say that God could turn (*convertere*) the bad wills of evil men into good wills.

Note that for Augustine these ‘turned’ wills would not be destroyed or rendered unfree, as the free-will defence would have it, rather they would just be turned from bad to good, with no harm done. Why then did God not do so? Because He did not choose to. And why did He not choose to? God only knows (*Cur noluerit, penes ipsum est*). We can say at least this, that had He made all men good, at least

one class of good creatures would not have existed, that is, those who are converted by the thought of the miserable condition of evil doers. 'Thus by increasing the number of the best kind of thing, the number of good kinds would be diminished' (11.10.13). This argument from *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis* is not just different from the free-will defence, it conflicts with it. Thus, in looking at *On Free Will*, it is plausible to interpret the presence of a sketchy version of this argument, where one would have expected a libertarian to offer the free-will defence, as evidence that Augustine was not assuming a libertarian understanding of freedom in the earlier work, and that his underlying metaphysics of free will did not change radically between the earlier work and the time he wrote *On Diverse Questions to Simplician*. Though he did adjust his emphases on the roles of grace and free will, he was always a compatibilist when it comes to how the will actually works.

Focusing on the philosophical question of Augustine's compatibilism is helpful in assessing the historical development of his thought since it provides reason to be careful not to over-emphasize the difference between the early and the later Augustine. But if the later Augustine leaves no room for genuine human agency in the story of human destiny, and if this is difficult to square with the absolute goodness and justice of God, then the conclusion thus far seems to be an unhappy one. Augustine always held that the rational agent chooses on the basis of what it judges most desirable, and God is the cause of the intellect and the desiring nature which determine the choices. How can Augustine avoid the conclusion that God is the author of sin?

Here is a possible answer: After the Fall the human being is inevitably drawn to sin by desire for lesser goods, unless God steps in with the grace which will draw the will irresistibly to the good, and, if God gives persevering grace, to salvation. This is indeed a compatibilist story. But it describes the present, *post-lapsarian* condition. And mankind is in this fallen state because of the free choice of the first human beings. So Adam and Eve, and before them Satan, are the originators of evil, and God is not responsible for it. This is indeed Augustine's view. And if he allows to un-fallen creatures a will which is free in the libertarian sense, then he may be able to prevent the conclusion that God determines the created will to choose moral evil. Augustine certainly sees a distinction between the un-fallen and the fallen will. I will argue, though, that he is a consistent compatibilist and thus is unable to avoid the difficult consequence that created agency is only a secondary agency. God is the only primary agent and, though Augustine consistently insists that his view does not entail it, bears the ultimate responsibility for sin. A careful look at Augustine's analysis of the causes for the first sins will prove the case.

In *On Rebuke and Grace* (426/427 CE), one of the later anti-Pelagian works, Augustine draws a clear distinction between Adam's will before the Fall, and the human will in its present condition. In answer to the question of how Adam can

be blamed for failing to persevere in the good, if he didn't receive the perseverance to enable him to do so, Augustine writes,

If that man had not abandoned this help through free choice, he would always have been good, but he abandoned it and was in turn abandoned. This help was, of course, such that he could abandon it if he willed to and could remain in it if he willed to, not such that it would make him to will this (11.31) For he could have persevered if he willed to, but his not willing to do so came from his free choice which was at that point so free that he was able to will both good and evil. (11.32)²³

We have seen that positing an ability to choose between good and evil is consistent with compatibilism. The question is this: is the difference between the pre-lapsarian and the post-lapsarian will that the former has libertarian freedom while the latter does not? Or is the difference that after the Fall the will is presently being inexorably drawn downwards to sin, unless, by God's grace, it is being inexorably drawn upwards to salvation, while before the Fall there was a time when Adam's will continued in a state of being drawn towards the good but in a condition such that, upon the arising of new desires, it could judge the newly presented objects most desirable and choose on that basis to sin or to persevere in the good, depending upon the character of the new desires. This would be a compatibilist freedom to choose between good and evil. Augustine can maintain that God did not make Adam with a defective *nature* such that he must sin by a sort of natural necessity. He might not have sinned, had he desired to persevere in the good more than to abandon it. But the created agent is not the creator of its desires, and if pre-lapsarian freedom was compatibilist, then Adam was drawn inevitably by a desire for which he does not bear the ultimate responsibility. God might have implanted in him the desire to persevere in the good in such a way that he would judge that choice most desirable and pursue it. So if pre-lapsarian freedom is compatibilist, it is difficult not to see God as the ultimate source of sin.

It is not enough to insist upon the libertarian interpretation of pre-lapsarian freedom because justice requires it.²⁴ That argument is driven by libertarian intuitions which Augustine apparently does not share, and in this he is in the company of many, perhaps most, contemporary philosophers who work on the metaphysics of free will. Compatibilism has been, and is, very popular, and it is essentially the claim that the agent bears moral responsibility for choices which were determined by causes independent of him. And there is very strong evidence for the interpretation that Augustine is a consistent compatibilist.

The best way to make the case is to examine Augustine's clearest and most well-developed discussion of the causes of the first sin, and that is in book 12 of *The City of God* (413–427 CE, book 12 would have been written between 417 and 425) where he discusses the fall of the bad angels. At the most general level, setting aside the difference between being embodied and being purely spiritual, Augustine seems to understand the workings of the human and angelic wills as

essentially the same. In the text cited above from *Rebuke and Grace*, in the ellipsis between the two passages quoted, he writes,

But the fact that [Adam] did not will to remain in [a good will], is of course, his fault, as it would have been his merit if he had willed to remain in it, as the holy angels did. When the other angels fell through free choice, the holy angels remained standing through the same free choice and merited to receive the reward due to their remaining, ...

There are two reasons to focus on the *City of God* text. First, in analysing Adam's choice, Augustine must situate the discussion within the actual Genesis texts, which import details which distract from the philosophical question of how the will works. In writing about the angelic will, Augustine can focus on the pure mechanics of the causes of the choices of the good and bad angels. Secondly, with the angels we have a 'control group'. The good angels did not fall, and so the analysis of the workings of the will is clarified by centring on the question: Why did the bad angels fall while the good angels persevered in the good?

Well, why? Augustine insists that the difference does not lie in their nature. The first chapter of book 12 is entitled, 'Concerning the one nature of the good and bad angels'. The evil choices of the bad angels are not the result of an evil nature, but must be attributed to their wills and desires (12.1). We know this because the bad angels are justly punished for this sin, and 'No one pays retribution for faults of nature but for faults of will' (12.3). Then what could have caused them to sin? Augustine answers, 'If you should seek the efficient cause of this evil will, nothing will be found' (12.6). By an 'efficient' cause, Augustine means something which takes action to produce an effect. There cannot have been a willing agent which caused the first evil will, for the will of the agent would have to have been good or bad. It is absurd to say that a good will could cause evil, but were it caused by a pre-existing evil will then it would not have been the first. The only option left as a cause for the evil will is something which does not have a will, one of those good things lower down on the scale of being which might serve as an object of the perverted choice. But, though inferior, these things are good in themselves, and, again, good cannot be the efficient cause of evil. Augustine has exhausted the possibilities. There just is no efficient cause for the evil choices of a free will.

There *is* an efficient cause of the will to persevere in the good angels, and it is God. We have seen above that God's grace is the active cause of the will to persevere to salvation in the fallen elect. Essentially the same explanation for a good will holds for the good angels. Either they were created complete with their good wills, in which case the good will must come from the Creator, or it was later given to them by God. It cannot be the case that they were created without the good will and then chose the good on their own. 'If the good angels were at first without a good will and produced it in themselves without the operation of God, then it follows that, on their own they made themselves better than they were made by God. And that is absurd.' It must be through God's work that they receive this

good will because ‘they could not have made themselves better than they were made by the best Creator’. ‘And the effect of their good will was that they should be turned [*converterentur*] not to themselves who were inferior in being, but to Him who supremely exists, so that by clinging to Him they might advance in being and live in wisdom and happiness by participation in him’ (12.9).

Augustine makes roughly the same point regarding Adam’s will in *Unfinished Work Against Julian*. Those who do evil do it through their own wills, but those who do good do it through God. We must say this, otherwise we would be committed to the view that ‘a man is good through himself, not through God, or at least that he becomes better through himself than through God’. And this is a position which Scripture plainly proves false (5.57). When the pre-lapsarian will chooses the good it is determined to do so by God. And yet the angels are meritorious, and Adam would have been also, had he persevered in the good.

We know why the good angels choose what they choose. But what of the bad angels? There is no *efficient* cause for evil, but does that mean that there is nothing more to be said? Speaking of the bad angel, Augustine writes that if someone says,

... that [the bad angel] himself produced [*fecisse*] the evil will though he was good before the evil will, he should ask why he caused it, whether because he is a nature, or because he is made from nothing. He will find that the evil will arises [*incipere*] not from the fact that he is a nature, but from the fact that that nature is made from nothing (12.6).

The cause of the first sin ‘is not efficient but deficient’. The bad choice consists only in deserting the higher good for lesser goods, and we cannot grasp its cause any more than we can see darkness or hear silence (12.7).

That the cause of the evil will is ‘nothing’ and ‘deficiency’ is a case Augustine makes consistently throughout his career, from *On Free Will* (2.20.54) all the way through to the book against Julian which he left unfinished at his death. There are a number of things Augustine might mean by this, and recent scholars have offered different suggestions. A canvas of the possible interpretations will support the thesis that Augustine is straightforwardly compatibilist. Even the pre-lapsarian will which chooses evil does so inevitably, drawn by its desires, which desires do not result from a choice for which the un-fallen agent can be held responsible.

A first possibility is this: to hold that the first sin arises ‘out of’ or ‘from’ nothing might mean only that it is the agent’s being created from nothing that allows for the *possibility* of an evil will. Augustine seems to be saying this in the *Unfinished Work Against Julian*. In the dialogue, Julian accuses Augustine of a crypto-Manicheanism. Julian argues that saying that ‘nothing’ is a sort of cause for sin is really no different from the Manicheans blaming moral evil on the *tenebrae* (darkness). Augustine insists that his view is quite different:

‘Nothing’ is not any sort of thing at all and has no force or power. When we say that sin is possible (not necessary) because the creature is made from nothing, all we

mean is this: things are either from God or from nothing. The Son and the Spirit are from God, for the one is begotten and the other proceeds, and they are co-equal with God. Created things are not from God in the sense of sharing the divine substance. Nor are created things made from some pre-existing substance. If creatures were from God as the Son and the Spirit are, they would be God and so evil would not be a possibility for them. This is why we say that it is creation from nothing which makes evil possible. (5.27–38)

But this cannot be all there is to the role of 'nothing' as the deficient cause of the evil will. Creation *ex nihilo* must be seen as the cause of the *possibility* of the evil will, but it cannot function as an explanation for the first sins. The good angels were equally created *ex nihilo* and so it is equally possible for them to sin. But the question that Augustine is attempting to answer is: why did the evil angels sin while the good persevered in the good?

A second interpretation of Augustine's claim that 'nothing' is the cause of the first sins is that the original choice for evil is absolutely without a cause, in the sense of being without explanation, radically unintelligible. William Babcock writes, 'If silence is the absence of sound and darkness the absence of light, deficient causality, it would seem, must be the absence of cause.'²⁵ Yet Augustine, in speaking of this deficient cause, does hold that we can 'know' silence and darkness, when our ears and eyes fail to perceive sound or light (12.7). And silence and darkness, though nothing, have a sort of defective, yet explanatory, causal efficacy. In answer to the question, 'Why didn't you see that rock?', 'It was dark' is a comprehensible explanation, although it posits 'nothing', an absence, rather than an efficient cause for one's failure to see. The analogy would seem to suggest, not that the first sins are utterly unintelligible, but rather that they are to be explained by the absence of something that would have prevented them.

T. D. J. Chappell agrees with the interpretation that Augustine's appeal to 'nothing' as a defective cause means that the first evil wills are uncaused and unintelligible. The first created agents were rational and wise. If they chose to do something they knew to be wrong, the choice must be unmotivated. Chappell writes,

Such an action is, by its very nature, inexplicable, simply because the explicability of an action can only mean the possibility of relating it to some good at which it is supposed to aim. But if no good whatever is aimed at by an action as correctly described, then of course we cannot specify any good to which it is related; and hence it is necessarily true that we cannot explain it.²⁶

Yet, throughout his career, Augustine frequently discusses the motives for sin. The evil choice aims at a lesser good, not at no good at all. In book 1 of *On Free Will* Augustine writes that *libido* is what motivates all wrongdoing (1.3). In book 3 he holds that, 'the will is not drawn to do anything unless something is perceived'. He goes on to remark that Adam's choice was motivated by Satan's suggestion, but wonders how Satan himself, being the first sinner, could have

perceived the option of evil, which he must have done, since '[s]omeone who wills, certainly wills something'. He answers that, in knowing God, Satan could recognize his own soul and develop a desire to exalt himself in an inappropriate imitation of God (3.25.74–76). In *The City of God*, immediately after the text on how attempting to know the 'defective' cause is like trying to hear silence or see darkness, Augustine inserts a chapter (12.8) on how evil consists in choosing to pursue the lower good over the higher. Pride, for example, which motivates the sin of the evil angels, is a perverse love of one's own power. Later in *The City of God*, when he is elaborating on the sins of Adam and Eve, Augustine argues that pride is the beginning of an evil will, '[b]ut what is pride but desire for a perverse exaltation?' (14.13).²⁷ It is indeed puzzling why a good, rational, and knowledgeable creature would succumb to the desires which lead it away from God, but Augustine is very clear that it chooses on the basis of desire.

Moreover the interpretation which holds that the first sin is unmotivated and inexplicable, would attribute to Augustine what is probably the worst solution, philosophically speaking, to the question of how to assign the respective causal roles to God and created agents in creaturely choice. It entails *both* the intelligibility problem *and* the conclusion that God cannot escape responsibility for sin. Augustine, as all his interpreters agree, is very clear that God is the efficient cause of the good choice, for example of the perseverance of the good angels. But in the sort of morally significant choice at issue there are only two options. If the agent does not choose the good, then he chooses evil. Thus, if God does not efficiently cause the good choice, the bad choice must follow. On this interpretation, the bad choice is both inevitable *and* unintelligible.

Scott MacDonald offers a different understanding of the deficiency and unintelligibility involved in the first sins, what he refers to as 'primal' sin. The choice to sin is motivated and intelligible in the sense that the will is moved by desire for some recognizably good, though inappropriate, object. The puzzling element is how a desire for the inappropriate object could succeed in motivating choice for a creature made both good and wise, for whom awareness of God is a given. MacDonald suggests that the 'deficient cause' of primal sin may be a preceding 'carelessness in practical reasoning', a failing to attend to the evidence available, which, while not itself some sort of motivating desire, nonetheless allows the inappropriate desire to win out.²⁸ He writes that Augustine's 'analysis splits the act of sin into two components – an act of will and a failure to attend to relevant reasons'. The act of will is explicable in terms of the motivation, but the success of the inappropriate motivation must be explained by the preceding failure. The 'deficiency' is not that the first sins are unmotivated, but rather that the preceding reasoning involves a lack of attention which can plausibly be analysed as a 'deficient' cause.²⁹

This is an interesting suggestion, but there are difficulties with it. It does not succeed as an interpretation of Augustine, since in the texts where Augustine

discusses the original sins, he does not trace them to any preceding carelessness in practical reasoning.³⁰ This is not too serious a problem for MacDonald, though. He explains that he is interested in not only reconstructive interpretation, but also in a constructive answer to the problem of primal sin, and so he admits to extending 'Augustinian ideas beyond what [he] can claim to have found explicitly in the texts'.³¹

The more interesting question is whether or not this is a successful extension of Augustinian ideas such that, given Augustine's analysis of the first sins, the proposed 'failure to attend' could play the role of the deficient cause in a way which leaves the agent morally responsible for the first sin. It seems not. MacDonald sometimes writes that it is the initial failure itself which is 'blameworthy – a failure one could and should have avoided'.³² But Augustine is adamant that blame can attach only to voluntary acts of will. If this initial failure is a voluntary act of will, then it, and not the choice following from it, is the primal sin which needs explanation and which results from some preceding deficient cause. MacDonald holds that the initial failure is not a voluntary act, or indeed any sort of act at all.³³ But then, contrary to MacDonald, the failure itself cannot be blameworthy.

Sometimes MacDonald writes as if it is the choice which results from the failing that incurs blame: 'culpability for evil traces back to choices resulting from these failures and no farther'.³⁴ But if the failures themselves are instances of misdirected attention, which are not voluntary acts and not in themselves blameworthy, and the primal sins are the result of these deficient causes, then the choice is determined by a mental phenomenon not under the control of the agent. How, then, can the agent be responsible for the primal sin?

And, if the issue is *Augustine's* understanding of primal sin, one is left with the question of what explains the success of the good angels and the failure of the bad, in attending to the relevant facts. MacDonald suggests that the failure to attend may be genuinely uncaused, in an entirely innocuous way. We do not expect a causal explanation for every instance of *not doing* something, and so a lack of a cause of the failure to attend is not a violation of any principle of intelligibility.³⁵ This is a fair point, and useful in MacDonald's attempt to construct a plausible analysis of primal sin and wrongdoing in general. It does not, however, move us towards a non-compatibilist interpretation of Augustine, and hence it does not solve the problem that Augustine's view entails attributing responsibility for the primal sin to God.

Following MacDonald's suggestion, suppose that the difference between the good and the bad angels is that the former succeed in attending to the relevant reasons and the latter fail. Augustine has told us that the good angels do not remain good on their own, but rather through the grace of God. So, on the present hypothesis, God's grace works as the efficient cause of the good wills of the good angels by causing them to attend properly to the relevant reasons. Without this

grace they would have fallen, too. Thus the failure to attend is inevitable without God's grace. Perhaps we cannot point to a cause or reason for the initial failure to attend, but we know that the creature cannot attend on its own, and hence *will* fail without grace. MacDonald's 'Augustinian' analysis of the role of the failure to attend in practical reasoning as an explanation of primal sin and wrongdoing is an interesting and fruitful one. However, it is probably not what Augustine had in mind. Nor does it supply an interpretation of deficient causality which challenges the compatibilist reading of Augustine and allows him to absolve God of the responsibility for sin.

The most plausible interpretation of Augustine's claim that 'nothing' causes the first evil wills is that 'nothing' is the absence of something, the presence of which would have prevented the created agent from following its desires for the lesser good. And this is exactly what Augustine says. In *The City of God* he explains why the bad angels fell while the good angels stood firm. 'Either they received less grace of the divine love than those who persevered in it, or, if both were created equally good, they fell through an evil will, while the others, receiving more help, achieved that plenitude of bliss from which they are absolutely certain never to fall away' (12.9). Since God's grace is the efficient cause of the good will, if it is absent, the created agent inevitably follows its baser desires. This is not to say that the first agents chose evil by any necessity of their nature. They could have chosen the good, by their own wills, had God's grace caused them to do so. But it didn't, and so they fell, not by natural necessity, but nonetheless inevitably.

The problem with this interpretation is that it leaves Augustine's position open to the charge that the responsibility for the original evil lies with God, not with the first created agents. The creatures themselves did not produce their lower desires *ex nihilo*. They arise naturally in a being made from nothing. And then God fails to help when He could do so. Babcock writes that here Augustine 'has at least intimated that the origin of the evil will lies outside the will itself and ultimately implicates the God who gave grace to some but not to others ... the first evil will, in the end, is not an instance of moral agency'.³⁶ Babcock sees Augustine as vacillating uneasily between the view that the first sin is radically unintelligible and the view that it is explained as caused by the absence of divine grace, without embracing either problematic position.³⁷

But the only reason to argue that Augustine does not clearsightedly hold that the first sins are caused by the creature's inevitably pursuing its base desires due to a lack of grace is the libertarian intuition that a rational agent is not morally responsible for choices which are ultimately determined by causes which are entirely outside its control. Augustine clearly and explicitly disagrees with this intuition. The good angels of *The City of God*, book 12, and the elect of the later anti-Pelagian works are, in Augustine's view, morally responsible agents. They choose the good voluntarily. They are the appropriate objects of moral praise. They merit heaven for their good wills. And their good wills are efficiently caused by God.

Since Augustine says that the created agent is morally responsible for the good it wills, when its will is moved in one direction by the efficient causality of divine grace, there is no reason to suppose that he must balk at saying that the created agent is morally responsible for the evil it wills, when its will is moved in the other direction by the deficient causality of base desire, unaided by divine grace.

Though there are differences between the pre-lapsarian and the post-lapsarian will, the difference does not go as deep as the basic workings of the will. On Augustine's account, creaturely freedom is compatibilist, before and after the Fall. This entails that the human condition is not changed as radically by the first human sins as it might seem. Before the Fall, man needed grace to persevere in the original good condition. After the Fall, man needs a somewhat different grace to rescue him from his sinful condition and turn him towards salvation. But in either case, without grace we are damned and with it we are saved, and all freely through our own wills, and all ultimately God's doing.

This is an extremely problematic position. It leaves no room for any 'primary' agency on the part of the rational creature, from which it seems to follow that God is indeed, 'the author of sin'. Augustine says that he denies this latter conclusion. Nonetheless, his view entails that all creaturely choices are determined, and they are determined by causes which stem from the will of God. If Augustine's later, anti-Pelagian, works go too far in allowing no originating causal efficacy to the human will, the problem is not that Augustine went to extremes in the heat of his anti-heretical polemics. The problem is the underlying compatibilism, which seems to have been his understanding of free will from his earliest writings on the subject, and which is applicable to his analysis of both the pre-lapsarian and the post-lapsarian will. If sin is really blameworthy and God is good and just, compatibilism is false.³⁸

Notes

1. Rebecca Harden Weaver *Divine Grace and Human Agency: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 232. The council did not attempt the difficult task of trying to sort out just how the human agent could choose to persevere on his own, when it is God who is the origin of all good things.
2. Neither my definition of determinism, nor my further conclusions, rest upon a particular position on the mind/body question. If choices are inevitably caused by factors outside the agent, the choice is determined whether the agent is material or immaterial.
3. Choices made in a deist universe, in which the divine designer set up the inexorable laws in the beginning and then let the universe run on its own, would be equally determined, it seems to me.
4. Recently Hugh McCann has proposed a view something like this, insisting that God is not blameworthy for the evil choices He causes in his created agents ('Divine sovereignty and the freedom of the will', *Faith and Philosophy*, 12 (1995), 582–589; and 'Sovereignty and freedom: a reply to Rowe', *Faith and Philosophy*, 18 (2001), 110–116). I offer a criticism in 'Does God cause sin?', *Faith and Philosophy*, 20 (2003), 371–378.
5. This is a position suggested by Anselm of Canterbury's doctrine of the will, especially in *On the Fall of the Devil*. I take it that it could be elaborated using Robert Kane's principle of plural voluntariness; *The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 109–115.

6. Libertarianism, with its concern for alternative possibilities, is apparently rather a latecomer to the free-will debate among philosophers. Susanne Bobzien finds it first in the work of Alexander of Aphrodisias in the second and third centuries CE; see her *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 401. Richard Sorabji in *Necessity, Cause and Blame* (Ithaca NY: Cornell UP, 1980), 227–233, notes that some scholars have argued that Aristotle suggests uncaused choice, but he disputes this reading.
7. *Ibid.*, 26–27.
8. Anselm of Canterbury does, I think, provide an adequate analysis of libertarian freedom in a (non-Pelagian) theist universe. Against the Stoic claim, he would advance two suggestions for solving the intelligibility problem. First, there is a difference between a choice being uncaused and being *self*-caused. Second, reward and punishment attach, not to the character of the agent before the choice, but to the character which the agent produces in himself *due* to his choice. This is all matter for a thick volume. I mention it here only to preclude the inference that, since I do not attempt to solve the problem here, I take it to be insoluble.
9. Augustine *Confessions*, 13.8.
10. *Idem City of God*, 11.28.
11. *Idem Expositio epistulae ad Galatas*, 49.
12. James Wetzel *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 84.
13. Dating of Augustine's works from 'The works of Augustine (dates and explanations)', in Allan D. Fitzgerald, OSA (ed.) *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), xliiiff.
14. Translation of *Grace and Free Choice* by Roland J. Teske, SJ, from *Answer to the Pelagians, IV*; pt 1, vol. 26 of *The Works of Saint Augustine* (Hyde Park NY: New City Press, 1999). Where a translator is not cited, translation is my own.
15. A similar position is expressed in the *Enchiridion* (26.100) written a few years earlier (421/422 CE).
16. Wetzel *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*, 8. Wetzel holds that for Augustine, 'There is no faculty of will, distinct from desire, which we use to determine our actions'. This seems to imply that the person cannot stand back from conflicting desires, deliberate between them, and commit to one or another. Introspection, on the contrary, seems to show that there is more to choice than simply following desire. But Augustine does often seem to elide *voluntas* as will and *voluntas* as motive or desire. I shall continue to speak as if Augustine assumes a faculty of will, separate from intellect and not literally identical with desire. However, if Wetzel is correct, then my argument is made even more forcefully. Our choices are determined by God since it is He who supplies us with our desires. Wetzel's interpretation simply dismisses the will as a 'middle-man', which chooses in accord with the desires.
17. I thank an anonymous reader for this journal for pointing out to me the importance of these Augustinian claims.
18. The analysis of wrongdoing in this early work owes much to the influence of Platonism. See William Babcock 'Augustine on sin and moral agency', *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 16 (1988), 40–56, 34. To my knowledge it is not standard to argue that Plato, or his ancient and classical followers, accepted a libertarian view of freedom. The Platonic image of wrongdoing seems to be consistently that the soul is dragged downwards by its desires for lower things.
19. In *Against Fortunas* (392 CE), the example of the unfree act is being forced to do something when tightly bound.
20. There are, of course, different versions of the free-will defence, and if all one meant by the term was an argument attempting to absolve God of responsibility for sin by laying the blame with created free will, then perhaps Augustine does offer one. I use the term to refer to a standard version of the argument which purports to show that it is best that God permit moral evil because He could not prevent it without destroying created freedom.
21. I am not aware of any developed theodicy among the libertarian Pelagians. To my knowledge, Anselm of Canterbury is the first Christian philosopher to develop a systematic theodicy along libertarian lines. In his *On the Fall of the Devil* he argues that morally significant freedom for a created agent entails the literally open option to choose between good and evil.
22. Etienne Gilson *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, L. E. M. Lynch (tr.) (New York NY: Random House, 1960), 147. In spite of this, Gilson consistently argues that Augustine always held the view which

- I have labeled 'compatibilist'; we inevitably choose what we judge to be most desirable. See 132–136, 143–164.
23. Translation by Teske (1999).
 24. See for example John Rist *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 107.
 25. Babcock 'Augustine on sin and moral agency', 47.
 26. T. D. J. Chappell *Aristotle and Augustine on Freedom* (New York NY: St Martin's Press, 1995), 190.
 27. See also *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis* (11.30.39).
 28. Scott MacDonald 'Primal sin', in Gareth B. Matthews (ed.) *The Augustinian Tradition* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1999), 110–131, 121.
 29. *Ibid.*, 130.
 30. MacDonald's evidence is slender. He quotes a paragraph from *On Free Will* (3.18.50) which contains two sentences which could support his hypothesis (118).
 31. MacDonald 'Primal sin', 113.
 32. *Ibid.*, 126.
 33. The status which MacDonald ascribes to the 'failing to attend' is itself difficult to assess. It is not an act, but is nonetheless an 'instance of agency' (132). One might suppose that, while succeeding in attending to the relevant reasons is an act, failing is not, since it's just a matter of not doing something. But when MacDonald comes to offer an example of the process of Eve's first sin, he writes that her failure to attend to the goodness of God might be explained by her concentrating on other facts she knows about the divine nature. But this is not a failure which consists in a 'not doing', it is a failure which consists in misdirecting ones concentration (121), which seems like an act, rather than a simple failure to act.
 34. *Ibid.*, 126.
 35. *Ibid.*, 131.
 36. Babcock 'Augustine on sin and moral agency', 48.
 37. *Ibid.*, 49.
 38. I would like to thank Robert Brown, James Wetzel, and anonymous referees for this journal for helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.